

Supporting People Inspection

Medway Council

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Supporting People Inspections

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively and delivers high quality local services for the public.

Within the Audit Commission, the Housing Inspectorate inspects and monitors the performance of a number of bodies and services. These include local authority housing departments, local authorities administering Supporting People programmes, arms length management organisations and housing associations. Our key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) set out the main issues which we consider when forming our judgements on the quality of services. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing.

This inspection has been carried out by the Housing Inspectorate using powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. In broad terms, these principles look to minimise the burden of regulation while maximising its impact. Supporting People inspections are carried out with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).

Supporting People is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide housing-related support services which help vulnerable people live independently.

The Supporting People programme brings together significant funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG), and the probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities (ALA). Unitary and metropolitan authorities and counties are designated as an administering authority with the county taking the lead in most cases for the districts in their area.

Administering local authorities work in partnership, with districts where this is relevant, to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for housing-related support services with housing, Social Services, health and the probation service providers. Negotiation and consultation is also required with service users, all housing and support service providers, other statutory service providers, the private sector and voluntary organisations to plan and commission support services to meet identified needs.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local authorities and their partners will need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: www.spkweb.org.uk.

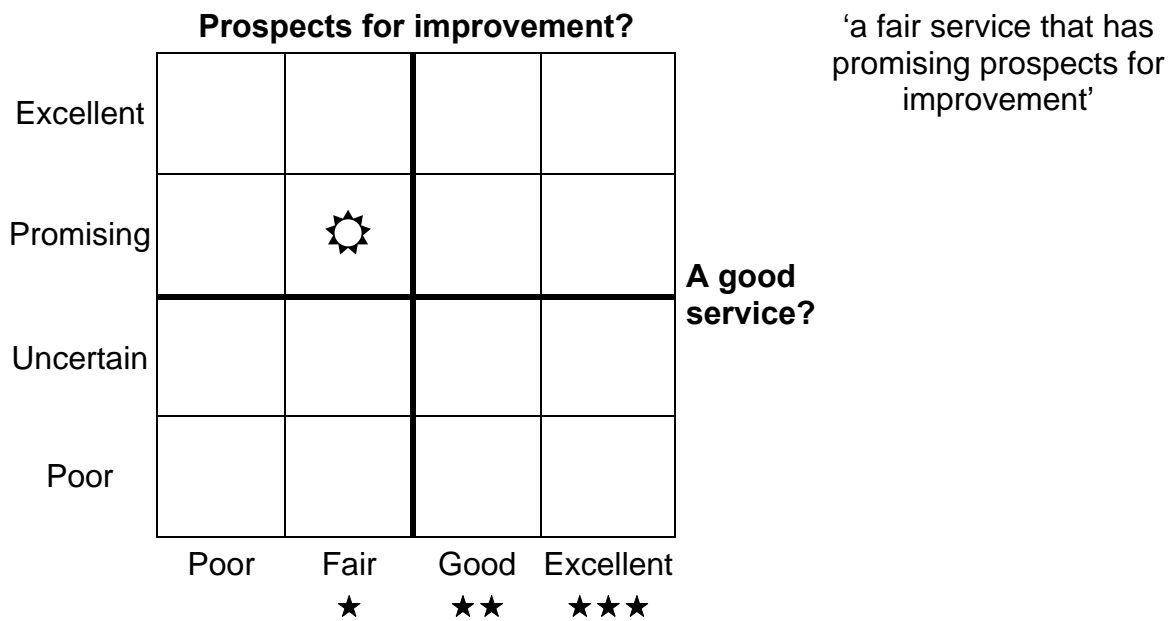
Summary

- 1 Medway Council is situated in the south east of England 30 miles from the centre of London. The district straddles the estuary of the river Medway and is part of the Thames Gateway growth area. It has a population of 251,100. White British people account for 92.2 per cent of the population, which is higher than the national and regional averages of 87 per cent and 91.3 per cent respectively.
- 2 Medway Council is a unitary council and was formed in 1998. It has 55 councillors representing 22 wards. In 2003 the Conservative Party took overall control of the Council.
- 3 The Council employs more than 6,500 people and its net revenue budget for 2006/07 is £299.5 million with a further £71 million to be spent on capital projects.
- 4 The Council acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in its area. The Supporting People team is based within the Community Services Directorate.

Scoring the service

- 5 We have assessed Medway Council as providing a 'fair'/one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Figure 1 Scoring chart¹



Source: Audit Commission

¹ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

- 6 The Supporting People programme is fair because:
 - there is a clear corporate commitment to the programme which is supported by a strong Commissioning Body which provides a strategic drive;
 - there is a strong approach to partnerships with health and probation being well engaged and demonstrating a full understanding of the programme;
 - the five-year strategy is comprehensive and was delivered on time;
 - service reviews have involved validation visits to all providers and have resulted in services being decommissioned and re-modelled to meet local need;
 - newly commissioned services reflect the needs of wider and more diverse groups;
 - services have improved as a result of service reviews including in the areas of support planning, health and safety and risk assessment; and
 - tendering has been used effectively to commission new services.
- 7 There are some areas of weakness within the delivery of the programme. These include:
 - shared targets have not been developed with partners;
 - there are some gaps in representation on the Core Strategy Development Group;
 - there are some gaps in needs analysis and mapping of vulnerable and diverse groups;
 - improvement planning following service reviews is not sufficiently developed;
 - there is no planned or strategic approach to service user involvement and existing consultation forums are not being fully used;
 - there is insufficient information publicly available about Supporting People and access to services and referral is not easy, clear or transparent;
 - data about the diversity of service users is not collected to enable a full understanding of the basis of current service provision; and
 - there is no systematic approach to measuring outcomes from improvements.
- 8 The programme has positive prospects for improvement.
 - There is a track record of delivering in accordance with Government deadlines and requirements and relevant performance indicators demonstrate continuous improvement in most areas.
 - Service reviews have led to tangible improvements for service users and in terms of the value for money delivered through the programme.
 - Clear and challenging aims for the programme are supported by a sound performance management framework.

8 Supporting People Inspection | Scoring the service

- There is effective leadership of the programme which is illustrated by some difficult decisions taken by the Council and the Commissioning Body.
- There is corporate commitment to the programme with the General Fund supplementing the administration grant.
- Recent organisational changes have the potential to enhance capacity through providing greater flexibility.

9 However, there are some barriers to improvement, including:

- organisational changes have yet to become embedded, leaving some gaps in operational knowledge within the programme;
- learning opportunities are not being maximised;
- shared performance indicators have not been developed with partners;
- there are some gaps in specific plans and there are no clear and robust plans for future value for money efficiency targets; and
- full use is not being made of the Supporting People IT system.

Recommendations

- 10 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs² and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council shares the findings of this report with customers, service providers and councillors, and addresses all weaknesses identified in the report. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation

R1 Strengthen user involvement by:

- *developing a user involvement/consultation strategy;*
- *ensuring that service users are able to influence strategic development of services in a meaningful and representative way; and*
- *improving feedback to service users about the monitoring of services.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- users will have greater influence over the services they receive;
- greater input by service users into strategic development;
- more accountability to service users; and
- improved services through greater responsiveness to service user views.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by April 2007.

² Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

Recommendation

R2 Strengthen access to information and knowledge of Supporting People and service provision by:

- developing more comprehensive information leaflets about Supporting People, including the fairer charging policy and ensuring these are widely distributed and easily accessible on the website;*
- producing regular publicity to keep all vulnerable groups, service users, providers and other stakeholders informed of new developments;*
- taking steps to reduce the length of time people have to wait to receive housing advice;*
- ensuring that all frontline staff have access to up-to-date information including a Supporting People services directory and are trained to deliver this information; and*
- introduce regular monitoring and performance reporting on access arrangements to ensure that clients do not experience long waiting times.*

11 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- potential service users and their representatives will be able to find out what services are available to them, make informed choices and access services appropriately;
- service users will be able to exercise more choice through greater information;
- service users, providers and other stakeholders will be more informed of developments in the Supporting People programme; and
- improved performance in handling access and referral arrangements; and
- frontline staff will be better informed and have a better understanding of supporting People.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by April 2007.

Recommendation

R3 Strengthen delivery arrangements by:

- *establishing local and shared targets and performance indicators;*
- *undertaking needs analysis in those areas where there are gaps in the knowledge of diverse and vulnerable groups;*
- *ensuring that providers report on the diverse profile of their service users and that the information is used to monitor that services reflect local needs;*
- *broadening the approach to learning and benchmarking; and*
- *establishing clear improvement planning processes to ensure that providers have a clear and consistent approach to improvement following the service reviews and which makes it possible to measure outcomes.*

12 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- shared measurable targets and outcomes with partners;
- the planning and delivery of services will match the needs of diverse vulnerable groups;
- improved learning from greater understanding of how services compare; and
- clearer understanding of outcomes from the Supporting People programme.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by July 2007.

Recommendation

R4 Strengthen governance arrangements by:

- *ensuring that gaps in the representation on the Core Strategy Development Group are addressed; and*
- *developing the brief of the Accountable Officer to ensure it encompasses the corporate champion role.*

13 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved understanding of the needs of under-represented groups in the development and management of the Supporting People programme; and
- a higher profile for Supporting People.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by November 2006.

- 14 We would like to thank the staff of Medway Council who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 17 to 21 July 2006.

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Report

Context

The locality

- 15 The district of Medway is situated in the south east of England 30 miles from the centre of London. It covers an area of 192 square kilometres and comprises the five towns of Rochester, Strood, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham and surrounding rural areas. The district straddles the estuary of the river Medway and is part of the Thames Gateway growth area.
- 16 Medway has a population of 251,000 of which approximately 85 per cent live in the five towns. White British people account for 92.2 per cent of the population, which is higher than the national and regional averages of 87 per cent and 91.3 per cent respectively. The next largest ethnic group is British/Indian at 2 per cent (regional average 1.1 per cent) and 1.5 per cent of the population are white non-British. Other ethnic communities are represented in Medway but in relatively small numbers.
- 17 Levels of deprivation in Medway are fairly typical of the national average. The district is 172nd out of 354 districts nationally (where 354 is the least deprived). At ward level the situation is more varied with some pockets of deprivation particularly in areas such as All Saints, Brook Lines in Chatham and Twydall in Gillingham, as well as some more affluent areas.
- 18 Almost half of the district is rural including eight internationally or nationally designated areas of nature conservation. These include three country parks managed by the Council as well as important estuary and marsh habitats.
- 19 Affordable housing is a key issue for local people with demand outstripping supply. Despite the average house price in the district in 2005 (£153,365) being below the regional (£233,426) and national averages (£190,681) homelessness remains a problem. In 2003/04, 7.9 households per thousand were accepted as priority homeless exceeding the worst quartile nationally of 6.6 households per thousand.

The Council

- 20 Medway Council is a unitary council and was formed in 1998. It has 55 councillors representing 22 wards. In 2003 the Conservatives took overall control of the Council and hold 31 seats. Labour have 16 seats, the Liberal Democrats 6 and 2 independents.
- 21 The Council adopted the Cabinet style of governance in 2001. The Cabinet is made up of nine councillors from the Conservative Group. These councillors are known as portfolio holders and are responsible for different council activities.

- 22 The Council reorganised its officer structure from 1 January 2006 to create a Chief Executive's Division and four directorates – Children's Services, Community Services, Regeneration and Development, and Finance and Corporate Services. There are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees that mirror the directorate structure.
- 23 The Council employs more than 6,500 people and its net revenue budget for 2006/07 is £299.5 million with a further £71 million to be spent on capital projects. The revenue budget represents a council tax increase of 5.5 per cent over 2005/06. In 2005/06 council tax at Band D was £1,069 which is below the national average of £1,195. The Council's council tax charge in 2005/06 was the third lowest of all mainland unitary authorities and the lowest in Kent.
- 24 The Council works with public, private and voluntary sector organisations in a range of different partnerships. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) comprises over 350 organisations and is chaired by the Leader of the Council. The LSP is currently reviewing its structure in preparation for negotiating a local area agreement. The Council also leads on the Medway Renaissance Partnership which co-ordinates projects to secure economic regeneration in the area. Under the terms of an arrangement with the DCLG the Council manages projects on behalf of the partnership. The Council is also working with the PCT on a number of initiatives including sharing budgets to secure improvements for people with mental health and learning disabilities. Partnerships are also in place with the police, various private sector contractors and the Medway Ethnic Minority Forum.
- 25 The Council's ambition for Medway is for it to become '*a city of learning, culture, tourism and enterprise for the Thames Gateway.*' The vision of the local strategic partnership set out in the Community Plan is '*to develop Medway into a fine and welcoming city: a city where people want to achieve in all aspects of their life, through work, leisure and learning.*'

The service

- 26 The Council acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in its area. Supporting People is now an integrated part of a social care contracts team within the Community Services Directorate. The contracts team consists of 12 staff.
- 27 The Supporting People programme is designed to meet the housing-related support needs of vulnerable people, including homeless people, older people with support needs, people with a learning disability, people with mental health problems, those with substance misuse problems, refugees, travellers and ex-offenders.
- 28 The total amount of Supporting People grant available to the Council in 2006/07 is £5.9 million. In addition, the Council received an administration grant of £175,000 to fulfil its role as the administering authority. Both grants have stayed at the same level as they were in 2005/06. The Council allocated an additional £34,358 to help with the administrative costs of the programme in 2005/06.
- 29 In Medway 44 service providers deliver a total of 95 schemes and in total the programme funds 2,255 units of housing-related support.

- 30 The Supporting People Strategy 2005/10 sets the following vision:
- 'To provide sustainable, co-ordinated and cost effective housing support, across all tenures, for those wishing to live independently and those who are at risk of homelessness in Medway'.*
- 31 The strategy objectives for the supporting People programme are as follows.
- *'To shape the future of the housing support service in Medway.*
 - *To develop and promote effective services that benefit clients and make a difference.*
 - *To develop and promote accessible services which meet the needs of diverse groups.*
 - *To develop and promote multi-agency strategic partnerships at all levels.*
 - *To develop and promote effective monitoring, review and administration of the Supporting People programme'.*

How good is the service?

Governance

- 32 There is a mix of strengths and weaknesses in this area. The Council has clearly established itself as the Administering Local authority (ALA), and there are some strong partnership links with the PCT to deliver strategic objectives. The Commissioning Body (CB) provides a strong strategic basis to deliver the programme, and the Core Strategy Development Group (CSDG) supports the CB by way of making recommendations. The Council has not developed any shared targets with its partners and there are weaknesses in representation at the CSDG. The role of the Accountable Officer does not feature as a corporate champion for the programme, and while the Council contributes to cross-authority working and is aware of the resource offered by the voluntary sector, the impact of these two partners is not clear.

Corporate commitment

- 33 The Council has clearly established itself as the ALA. Supporting People has featured as an agenda item at various overview and scrutiny meetings that has included monitoring the delivery of the five-year strategy, decommissioning of services and reports of new contracts to cabinet. There have been two annual awareness days held to raise the profile of Supporting People. The days included presentations by a range of internal and external speakers and were attended by a range of stakeholders, officers and residents. An opportunity has not been taken to further raise the profile of Supporting People by holding a similar event in 2006.

- 34 The new Council structure supports cross-authority working. The new directorate of Community Services includes adult social care, housing and a joint team to commission, procure and monitor contracts across adult social care and Supporting People. This is aimed to provide a consistent and cohesive approach to service provision across social care and Supporting People, in order to provide a range of services to vulnerable people in Medway.
- 35 Councillors have been included in the delivery of the programme. There has been regular attendance at the CB of the portfolio holders. Councillors have been supportive when the programme has encountered difficult decisions, for example where decommissioning of services attracted media attention. Weekly meetings take place between the portfolio holder and the Director which provides an opportunity for Supporting People and other social care issues to be addressed promptly. However, an opportunity has been missed to use the weekly newsletter sent to councillors to raise awareness of Supporting People issues with all councillors.
- 36 Strategic links between Supporting People and other partner objectives are not sufficiently developed. There is no strategic link between Supporting People and the Community Safety Plan 2005/08. The Council has not yet developed a framework to measure the impact of Supporting People to wider strategic objectives and targets. Shared strategic targets have not been introduced to incorporate the objectives of partners', and this prevents the Council from measuring or demonstrating the impact of Supporting People on areas such as the community safety plan, and more specific areas such as hospital admissions and delayed discharges.

Commissioning Body

- 37 The CB is a strong and strategically-focused forum. It has had consistent membership at a senior level from the three main partners, with all three representatives from the Council, PCT and probation involved since the beginning of the programme. It has been fundamental in developing the role of the Council as the ALA, the five-year strategy and delivery of the programme. The joint work has brought in valuable perspectives from the partner organisations, and strategic decision-making is evident in minutes of the CB.
- 38 The CB has made difficult and independent decisions in the strategic interest to deliver the programme. The decommissioning of some services has attracted some challenge which includes providers lobbying the overview and scrutiny committee, media coverage and challenge from providers. These have been handled well by the CB in partnership with councillors and officers, and has included due consideration to the future of existing services users.

Core Strategy Development Group

- 39 There is a CSDG in operation in Medway. It meets quarterly and receives regular reports on the programme, for example service reviews, commissioning, provider performance indicators and budgets. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that there are clear links between the recommendations made by the CSDG and the decisions taken by the CB. This is important as it shows that the CSDG is informing the strategic delivery of the programme.
- 40 The CSDG is not fully representative. Attendance at meetings dropped towards the end of 2005/06 although it has since risen. Attendance or input from wider partners is not explicit. For example the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) are not listed as members in their own right but are represented through probation. Providers have only been represented through two representatives from the Inclusive Forum. In March 2006 the terms of reference of the CSDG were reviewed and it was agreed that representatives of providers should be allowed to attend the meetings. However, this is a recent development and there has only been one meeting since it was agreed. Although the list of representatives of the CSDG has been extended, this had not had an impact at the time of this inspection. The lack of a fully representative CSDG may prevent the development of the programme sufficiently reflecting input from all relevant partners, and ultimately gaps in service provision and development for service users.

Accountable Officer

- 41 The Accountable Officer does not have a clear corporate champion role for the programme. The Social Care Commissioning Manager whose primary role is to ensure that services are in place for vulnerable people in Medway is the designated Accountable Officer. Her role is not apparent as a corporate champion for Supporting People, and some officers and councillors were not aware of the designated Accountable Officer. The champion role has been devolved to the lead officer for Supporting People. This approach reduces the strategic ability and resource to raise the profile of Supporting People and its links to other strategic agendas. This is particularly relevant as the lead officer has been heavily engaged in operational issues such as negotiating contracts following service reviews and embedding the new team following the restructure.

Partnership arrangements

- 42 There is positive engagement with health and probation partners in the programme. Both are represented at the CB and CSDG, and engage in the development of the programme. There is a particularly strong working relationship between the Council and the PCT. This has been developed over the years and has resulted in much joint working. For example; joint teams for mental health and learning disabilities, joint rapid response teams, and in the overall approach to service delivery for minority groups. This provides the Supporting People programme with a sound basis to incorporate priorities of the health service.

- 43 There has been limited involvement of the voluntary sector in the delivery of the programme. The voluntary sector was involved as part of the consultation process for the five-year strategy, voluntary organisations are able to attend the Inclusive Forum and there have been instances when individuals from the voluntary sector have been involved in setting out service specifications. The voluntary sector had some influence in the competitive procurement process, being actively involved in the development of the service specification. The chair of the CVS has knowledge of and involvement in the programme. However, while Supporting People recognise the diverse client knowledge held by the voluntary sector, it is unclear how the programme consistently works with the voluntary sector and draws and benefits from this wide span of knowledge.

Cross authority partnership working

- 44 Medway contributes to the cross-authority group with Kent, Surrey, West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove. The group has shared and developed work in the follow areas; development of a model steady state contract; value for money benchmarking group; and shared good practice for service reviews. Although there are examples of development in these areas within Medway, it is not clear to what extent this was attributable to the work done through cross-authority working.
- 45 Medway also attends South East Regional Interest Group (SERIG) meetings, and is actively contributing to the group's work on producing a regional framework for the Supporting People programme in the South East of England. Cross-authority working is presenting some challenges because of the diverse make up of the authorities which makes it difficult to form the regional housing strategy and develop benchmarking. However, close links have been made with the unitary councils with which the Council feels it shares more characteristics.

Delivery arrangements

- 46 There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in this area. There is clear corporate commitment to the delivery of the programme provided through additional finances and resources. Action plans and risk management are adequately in place and monitored, as is provider performance. Progress has been made in introducing steady state contracts. The restructure has not yet become embedded and there are weaknesses in the knowledge and development of the officers in place to support the programme. Outcomes are not clearly evident from cross-authority working, the Inclusive Forum and needs analysis. The Council has not developed shared performance outcomes with partners.

Corporate commitment

- 47 There is corporate commitment to support the delivery of the programme. In 2005/06 the Council supplemented the administration grant by £34,358, and the new structure introduced in 2006/07 is aimed at providing more flexibility and knowledge through staffing resources. Corporate resources are available to the Supporting People team, and these have been utilised by the lead officer for example from the corporate procurement team in and Human Resources.

- 48 Supporting People participates in various forums with partners. This includes the partnership boards for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues. These are used to network with partners, identify some of the needs of particular groups and assist in the joined up working approach. There are some forums that Supporting People is not yet attending, for example the recently formed Young Persons Allocation Group. This is a missed opportunity to raise awareness of the programme.
- 49 Joint working is in place between Supporting People and some partners. The joint inspection of services for older people led by CSCI in 2005 identified good connections between health and social care, and there are examples of joint working between partners. These include:
- joint working with housing in the decommissioning of services and the impact of stock availability (where the provider was also the landlord);
 - joint commissioning of work with housing for the re-tendering of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), a homeless hostel, generic floating support and the new assessment team (the latter two are to be implemented in October 2006); and
 - the involvement of DAAT in considering the tendering document for two new services for young people with complex needs, both contracts have now been awarded.

Supporting People Team

- 50 Supporting People forms an integrated part of a wider social care commissioning team. As part of a recent restructure posts that were previously exclusively covering the Supporting People role and were located in the housing section became integrated as part of wider social care commissioning and administrative roles. Officer roles span both aspects of Supporting People and social care, with an aim to provide a more flexible approach. Within the team there is a lead officer, four contract officers, a contracts supervisor and a contracts administration team.
- 51 The operation and knowledge of the team has not yet been embedded. The division of functions for the staff have only recently been decided and the majority of staff that we met were not clear on how or when this would be implemented. While staff new to Supporting People have received written guidance on the programme and procedures in place, there has been no specific training on Supporting People. Staff required to use the Supporting People IT system have received limited training on its usage. Staff are not yet adequately developed or sufficiently skilled in the area of Supporting People, and this currently restricts the support provided to delivering the programme to providers and ultimately to service users. For example there was a delay in sending out the KPI workbooks to providers. This jeopardises the Council's previous good performance of submitting the quarterly data to the DCLG on time.

- 52 Staff are not yet working cohesively as a team. The effect of the restructure on individual staff is still apparent and some staff are not fully supportive of the new structure. Difficulties with working arrangements are exacerbated by the fact that administrative staff are located in different offices to the rest of the contracts team. Overall, the team is yet to comprehensively develop its working arrangements in order to support and sustain the delivery of the programme.

Grant conditions and eligibility criteria

- 53 Although the Council were slow to introduce eligibility criteria (June 2005), consultation took place on the criteria as part of the wider strategy consultation and was applied in the service reviews with minimal disruption. The Council does not consider that it has any ineligible services now that the service reviews have been completed. Results from our survey of providers confirm that providers are generally satisfied with the grant eligibility criteria with some commenting that it has been made clearer.

Contracts

- 54 There has been some assistance for providers in relation to tendering for new contracts. The Supporting People team established guidance for providers, and all providers are informed of services open to tender. The accreditation scheme that is in operation with Kent County Council also enables providers that are accredited to attend briefings for tender submissions and ask questions. The quality of tenders has improved as a result of the guidance.
- 55 The Council has made progress in issuing steady state contracts. Twelve providers are on steady state contracts (one of which is to be signed, and one needs to be sealed), 23 are on interim contracts (with 7 in the final stages of negotiating steady state contracts). Three have Service Level Agreements (internal providers of older peoples services, learning disabilities and floating support that has been re-tendered).

Five-year strategy and needs mapping

- 56 The Council has a clear and comprehensive five-year strategy for Supporting People. It was submitted to the DCLG on time, makes clear links with national and local strategies and sets out the priorities for the programme. It is based on a needs assessment that was specifically commissioned for the strategy.
- 57 There has been a mixed level of needs mapping to further inform the programme. There has been some specific work carried out that has informed future service delivery, for example:
- an analysis of support needs of existing users when services were decommissioned for people with learning disabilities;
 - the level of need for substance misuse that has led to an increase in the level of floating support provision; and
 - joint co-ordination of needs data for young people between DAAT, YOT and 16plus that has led to tenders for schemes for young people with complex needs.

- 58 However, further needs mapping has not been carried out across the range of service users since the five-year strategy. For example, in relation to people with mental health issues, offenders, older people, teenage parents and travellers. This means that the Council does not have a full understanding of the needs of some vulnerable groups.
- 59 The future for ongoing needs assessment is not clearly set out. Future needs mapping is not being led by Supporting People officers. The Supporting People programme plans to link into corporate work through commissioning managers. However, it is not clear how and when this will be done. The Housing strategy section has just completed a housing needs assessment that Supporting People plans to utilise, and a consultant has been commissioned to carry out a specific survey for clients with supported housing needs, particularly older people and people with learning disabilities and mental health issues. However, this work was being commissioned by housing strategy staff with little input from Supporting People. This has the impact of limiting the role of Supporting People in ensuring and being aware of the various mechanisms in place for capturing needs mapping and ultimately ensuring that the programme adequately prioritises need. This is of particular importance as Medway is situated in the Thames Gateway development area, where development growth is anticipated to affect the demographics and population of Medway and surrounding areas.

Work planning

- 60 There is a clear business plan for Supporting People that sets out clear tasks that are linked to the five-year strategy. The plan includes SMART targets, deadlines and officer responsibility, although it does not make clear reference to resource requirements for the actions. Progress reports are regularly reported to the CB and CSDG, and officer Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) reflect the tasks in the plan.

Performance monitoring and management

- 61 There is an effective performance management framework in place to monitor the delivery of the programme. Both the CB and CSDG receive reports on provider performance, Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) scores, budgets and progress against the business plan.
- 62 The steady state contracts have a greater focus on outcome requirements than previously required. The contracts detail specific requirements related to performance that include an annual report on the QAF by the provider and annual review visits. However, steady state contracts have not yet been introduced across all providers, and at the moment Supporting People is not monitoring these outcomes where steady state contracts have been introduced.
- 63 There has been no development of the impact of Supporting People on strategic or partner objectives. There are no shared performance indicators across partners, and while floating support has been extended, the impact on tenant sustainability is not an element that the Council has focused on. This prevents the Council from assessing the impact of Supporting People and its benefits on wider strategic objectives with health and probation partners.

- 64** Risk management is adequately considered by the programme. Risk management plans are in place for the programme and service users. The programme plan is reviewed by the CB every six months, and a revised plan was introduced in January 2006. The Corporate Assessment found that the Supporting People strategy clearly identified the risks and barriers to delivering the programme.
- 65** Financial monitoring is carried out in line with corporate guidelines. A report by internal audit confirmed that both the administrative and grant provision budgets are regularly monitored and annual outturn forecasts produced in line with the Council's revenue budgetary monitoring cycle. Reports to the CB also show that regular budgetary updates have been provided to the governing body of the programme.

Fairer charging

- 66** The Council has not taken adequate steps to promote fairer charging. There is no fairer charging leaflet that specifically relates to Supporting People and the leaflet that does refer to fairer charging for adult services³ makes reference only to those that receive a community care service. There has been a reliance on providers to ensure that service users are informed on fairer charging. However, none of the providers at the focus group were aware of whether fairer charging operated in Medway. Some assessments have been carried out, however, the Council has not taken sufficient steps to ensure that all those potentially eligible for the service have been reached. Use has not been made of access to the housing benefit database system to target those who are not currently in receipt of housing benefit.

Relationships with providers

- 67** Supporting People has a positive relationship with providers. Providers find officers helpful, approachable and supportive. They had generally experienced quick responses to their enquiries, although a few had experienced delays when officers had been posed with challenging queries, for example in relation to legal aspects. An internal audit report in 2005 found that payments were made correctly and promptly and all providers confirmed that this was still the case at the time of this inspection.
- 68** An inclusive forum is in operation in Medway however, providers were critical of its purpose. Many considered that it operated as information sharing rather than a consultative forum. Many of the providers that we met could not recall being consulted on key items, including eligibility criteria, services review and the approach to value for money. These items may have been discussed at the forum, however, providers and Council officers are not yet working together effectively to consult, share good practice and deliver the programme. At the June 2006 Inclusive Forum attendees agreed to form a working group to discuss the future development of the forum.

³ Adult Care for Medway 2005 (We were informed that the Council were in the process of printing a new leaflet that would make specific reference to fairer charging and Supporting People).

Cross-authority working

- 69 Medway participates in cross-authority working. It has taken an active role in developing the approach to value for money, and participates in developing shared good practice. However, it is not clear how this has been used in practice to develop and improve services in Medway. Providers that we met were unaware how the programme in Medway had benefited as a result of cross-authority working, other than the joint accreditation with Kent County Council.
- 70 The Council has developed joint accreditation with Kent County Council. This was introduced for providers that serve in both authorities and has reduced the duplication of paperwork that providers are required to submit. Accreditation is linked to the tendering process for new services and can result in the provider passing to pre-qualification stage of the process that will reduce the process time.

Service reviews

- 71 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. The Council has completed validation visits for the Supporting People services, and as a result services have been decommissioned and re-modelled in order to meet local need. The approach to service reviews has largely been comprehensive. However, there is a weakness in the Council's framework for improvement planning and reviewing.
- 72 The Council has carried out the service reviews for all the schemes funded by Supporting People grant. However, due to some delays encountered at the end of 2005/06 a number of service reviews were not considered by the CB by the March 2006 deadline⁴. These reviews related to older people's services and the Council has plans to review all its services for older people during 2006. The review will also inform the future delivery of Supporting People services for older people.
- 73 Service reviews have generally been completed comprehensively and reported to the CB, and there is an appeals process in place and that has been used. Service review reports are well laid out, and include sections on strategic relevance, the QAF, some element of cost and price and service user involvement. Service reviews for older people's services were not as comprehensive as they were carried out towards the end of the service review programme. Insufficiently skilled staff were used for aspects of the review and the span of the service review was very wide. In two instances a service review covered 21 and 11 sheltered housing schemes. The Council took this approach to reduce demands on providers but the result of this was that significant variations between different schemes were not fully captured by the reviews.

⁴ Report to the CB 22 March 2006 "The [DCLG] do not consider a review to be complete until Commissioning Body has made a decision regarding the future commissioning and procurement of that service. As a result, although the reviews will have been completed we will have not met entirely the target set by the [DCLG]".

- 74 High cost services were prioritised for early service reviews, and these were predominantly services for people with learning disabilities. Reviews were carried out simultaneously with a comprehensive assessment applied. This involved a clear focus on the service user through a person centred approach and an individual care manager assessed the needs of all existing clients to ensure that future support was adequate. This led to the decommissioning of two services, re-modelling of two and introduction of one new service of eight units aimed to provide greater independence with a further 32 units to open in 2007/08.
- 75 Overall, providers welcomed the service review process. Although they had found the QAF an extensive framework, they considered that the service reviews had raised the standards of services, improved support planning and re-focused the provision of housing-related support.
- 76 The Council has not been sufficiently robust in administering improvement planning for service reviews. Providers are informed of the need to implement an action plan however, there is no specific guidance or template, and the service review report provides no timeframe for when recommendations should be implemented. The action plans we looked at were not SMART, and while a post-review meeting is held one month after the report is finalised the process for reviewing improvements subsequent to this is not clearly set down. While a provider must attain level C of the QAF in order to enter into contract negotiations, the absence of a framework for improvement planning and review does not indicate a transparent and clear process to be followed by the Council and providers, and does not support the spirit of continuous improvement.

Service user involvement

- 77 Weaknesses outweigh strengths in relation to service user involvement in the Supporting People programme. There is no planned or strategic approach to user involvement. Although there were some examples of positive engagement during the service reviews and in development of the five-year strategy, the quality of involvement was mixed. Existing consultation forums are not being fully utilised. Feedback on the results of service reviews was inconsistent.
- 78 There is a lack of a planned and strategic approach to service user involvement in relation to Supporting People. There is no consultation or communication strategy in place for the programme. This is despite the fact that an action point within the 2005/06 business plan to develop a communications strategy. There is a corporate Consultation Strategy but this does not address the specific details of how Supporting People clients can become involved. This means that the approach to service user involvement is not structured and there are gaps in the approach taken.

- 79 There has been limited involvement of service users beyond the service reviews. There is an Inclusive Forum but although this is open to service users in reality service users have not been encouraged to attend. The Inclusive Forum therefore acts more as a forum for providers. Members of the Inclusive Forum have been mindful of the need not to involve service users through the Forum in a tokenistic way. The Forum is involved with other representatives from the CSDG in exploring meaningful methods of service user involvement with a working group having recently been established. Beyond the Supporting People programme, there is recognition within the Council that service user and carer involvement requires development. An older person's mental health implementation team has been newly formed which is envisaged to assist service users and carers to influence the development of services.
- 80 Existing consultative forums are not being fully utilised to engage with service users. Although several forums exist which could be used to consult service users over Supporting People issues, there is little evidence that these are being utilised effectively. Service user involvement forums within Medway include partnership boards for people with learning disabilities and mental health, the pensioner's forum, partnership board for older people and a main link with carers through the Prince's Trust. Representatives of the Contracts Team attend these forums but there is a lack of evidence of positive outcomes in terms of engagement with service users.
- 81 There was some success in involving service users in service reviews. The best example of consultation involved Learning Disability service users. Clients were involved in the tender evaluation process for new contracts. They have attended briefings and asked questions of the potential contractors and service users of the contractors. This not only involves service users but also provides potential contractors with a better understanding of the needs and priorities of the service users. Advocates and parents for service users have been involved where relevant, and in one instance an independent advocacy group was involved in the consultation. Service users at a scheme for people with learning disabilities were involved in 'voices for choices' and helped to produce a service user newsletter some of which is in pictorial format.
- 82 Providers have mixed views about the effectiveness of service user consultation during the review process. Our postal survey of providers indicated that stakeholders and service users were contacted and consulted when the service reviews were carried out. They were notified of the reviews in advance and provided with clear explanations of the process. Service users were involved in individual and group interviews. However, providers were also critical of the approach taken with floating support service users where inappropriate use was made of a questionnaire, sent to a client group with a high amount of literacy issues.

- 83 There was a reliance on providers to feedback the results of service reviews to their clients. The lack of a Supporting People newsletter meant that there was no formal process of feeding back the results of reviews to service users. This means that there is likely to have been an inconsistent approach taken to informing service users how consultation during the service review period had had an impact on the outcome. Without clear feedback about consultation, it is likely that service users will have less interest in future consultation exercises.
- 84 There are some positive examples of ongoing service user involvement within Supporting People funded schemes. Some Pathway service users are involved in assisting with changing policies and procedures within the organisation. Support Plans are now a requirement and it is evident that at many schemes service users are involved in the development of these plans with their support workers.
- 85 Steps were taken to consult with service users, including some hard-to-reach groups over the development of the five-year strategy. Consultation mechanisms included a questionnaire sent to 235 clients and surgeries held across Medway where there were face-to-face interviews with ten clients. There was also a review and evaluation of a small number of homelessness case studies. A challenge group session was held at a scheme for teenage parents and meetings were held at sheltered schemes to discuss future provision. Partnership boards were also consulted as part of the process. The results of the consultation are summarised within the strategy. The findings have not yet been used to feed into a longer-term user involvement strategy which is a stated intention within the strategy.

Access to services and information

- 86 Access to services and information is a weak area for the Supporting People programme. Information is limited in detail, lacks customer-focus and is not widely available. Access to services and referral is not easy, clear and transparent.
- 87 Information on Supporting People is limited in detail and not widely available. A leaflet is available which explains what Supporting People is about. The leaflet explains what housing-related support is, who can be supported, how to apply, arrangements for ensuring services are effective, payment arrangements and an explanation of who service providers are. However, the impact of the leaflet is limited as it is only available in one of the Council's access points, and is not downloadable from the Council's website.
- 88 The information provided is not customer-focused. Information does not include service standards and was not developed with any input from service users. There is only limited reference to the complaints arrangements within the leaflet. This means that it is not clear to service users what they should expect from the Supporting People service.

- 89 There is a lack of easy to read literature about the programme. There is no summary of the five-year strategy available. This makes it more difficult for service users and others with an interest in the future of Supporting People services to understand the programme's priorities. There has been no involvement of an editorial panel of service users to support this area of development. As a result, leaflets and information may not always be user friendly.
- 90 Some key policy information relating to the programme is not available. Two of the major leaflets for supporting people, Fairer Charging and Better Care Higher Standards, are not available to service users. This means that the Council is not being fully open and transparent about its policies for charging.
- 91 There are inconsistencies in the availability of information at different access points. Front line staff are not aware of all the leaflets that could be available, which means that they are unable to signpost visitors effectively, and a mystery shop of the Council's information points found discrepancies in the housing leaflets that were available. For example housing application forms are not available from the Compass Centre in Chatham or the Civic Centre in Strood. The Gillingham office which houses the housing and advice centre has little available information on Supporting People services including homelessness, meaning that customers are left unaware of the services they can access.
- 92 Information is not readily available in alternative formats. Straplines on the Council's leaflets give information on interpreter services, but very little information on translation services or other relevant formats such as large print or audio. Although some corporate leaflets include a translated strapline in a range of languages, this is not the case with the Supporting People leaflet. This may extend the time it takes for people who require information in alternative formats or languages to receive the appropriate leaflet. Information is not targeted at particular client groups such as in pictorial format.
- 93 There is not a comprehensive directory of Supported accommodation which would include information on all Supporting People services. As a result, availability of this information for service users is limited.
- 94 Providers, service users and other stakeholders are not being kept fully up-to-date with developments in Supporting People. The lack of a newsletter means that an opportunity is being missed to keep people informed of developments and changes. Although updates are given verbally to members of the Inclusive Forum not all providers are able to attend, so might miss out on important information.
- 95 Access and referral is not easy, clear and transparent across all services, and can be confusing for customers wishing to access Supporting People services. Access to all Supporting People services must be made through the 'Home Choice' application form, including access to floating support; the guidance for filling in the application form does not mention Supporting People or how the service will be delivered.

- 96** As part of the inspection a number of anonymous enquiries were made at Council offices, requesting information or assistance with housing-related support. Responses to these 'mystery shopper' enquiries were met courteously, although not effectively. Most of the enquiries were directed to the housing advice service. Appointments are not offered. Most customers have to turn up at the offices, which have a ticket waiting system and on the day of the mystery shop customers had to wait over two hours to be seen. There are no public toilet facilities or baby changing rooms available at the Municipal Buildings where the housing advice centre is located. This approach to access acts as a disincentive to people presenting for housing advice and limits access to the Supporting People programme.
- 97** Supporting People clients are not benefiting from the improvements made to wider corporate access arrangements. The Council has a Corporate 'Customer First' initiative which allows customers to access Council services by telephone from 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am to 1.00pm on Saturday. However, customers who wish to access housing services cannot as yet use this route, and have to rely on traditional opening times of the housing service.
- 98** Information is not easy to access from the Council's website. Although there is a Supporting People page on the website this is not easy to find. The website does not have information available in other languages; changeable fonts sizes or browse aloud capability, although there is an option to change the background colour. The page contains information on what Supporting People is but does not effectively link to other pages or sites including those of partners. The site is not easily navigable for service users making information difficult to find. It is, however, positive that the Council has installed accessible internet information points in 27 locations across Medway.

Diversity

- 99** There are more weaknesses than strengths in this area. Supporting People is not adequately capturing needs information through current service provision and comprehensive needs analysis, to inform future service delivery across the broad range of client groups. However, newly commissioned generic floating support will provide services to previously under supported minority groups.
- 100** Diversity data is not collated for current Supporting People funded service users. Providers are not required to submit diversity details on the quarterly workbooks and details are not captured on the Supporting People IT database despite the function being available. This prevents the programme from understanding the basis of current service provision and identifying potential gaps in people accessing the services against demographic information for Medway.
- 101** Needs analysis is not sufficiently developed across the range of client groups. While some analysis has been carried out and has led to new or improved services, this is not across the range of all client groups. Since the five-year strategy was introduced there is a lack of information on how needs analysis for people with mental health issues, offenders, older people, teenage parents and travellers has been developed.

- 102** The Council has not ensured that the full range of needs of the BME community are being addressed. There are two Asian specific Supporting People projects in Medway for older people and a women's refuge, and during the service reviews translation services were used to incorporate the views of service users. Despite there being a target in the Supporting People annual plan to complete mapping of the BME community by October 2006, the extent of this and how it will be used is unclear. This potentially prevents the programme from ensuring that it is meeting the needs of the wider BME community.
- 103** The Council has been slow in commissioning a survey of travellers. The housing department plans to commission a survey with four neighbouring authorities. However, this is relatively late as the legal requirement to do this has been known about since 2004. This means that the current needs of the travelling community are not yet comprehensively known.
- 104** The plan to introduce generic floating support in October 2006 is aimed at addressing the needs of some smaller minority groups. It is envisaged that the generic provision will enable support to be provided for small groups, such as travellers, people with HIV/Aids, former sex workers, and those that would not necessarily require support provision solely for themselves.
- 105** It is unclear where Supporting People services feature in the corporate approach to older people. There is a clear steer from councillors and officers to improve services for older people, and the strategic review led by adult services plans to provide the framework for this. Supporting People services for older people have undergone service reviews, but decisions have not been taken regarding their future due to the strategic older persons review. The Supporting People annual plan indicates that consultation will take place by December 2006, and proposals will be submitted to the CB and CSDG by March 2007. Providers of older people's services were also unclear on the Council's approach to the future assessment and decision-making process of services, and did not feel that the Council had communicated this to them as well as it could. It is therefore not possible to ascertain the impact of the service reviews for older people's services, nor how or when the strategic review will improve services for older people requiring Supporting People services.
- 106** The absence of needs analysis information across the client group prevents the Council from ensuring that it is commissioning services for those most in need, and test current services suitably meet the need of vulnerable people. While Supporting People attend various forums that discuss the issues of minority groups, including the ethnic minority forum, the domestic violence forum and the probation accommodation forum, it is not explicitly clear how these have informed the delivery of the programme.

Outcomes for service users

- 107 Strengths outweigh weaknesses. Services now better meet local needs and priorities. There is a broader range of services to meet those needs identified through the needs analysis. Although it is apparent that services have improved following service reviews there is not a systematic approach to measuring the impact of changes in terms of outcomes for service users. The gaps in needs assessment also limits potential outcomes for some vulnerable groups.
- 108 There is an improved range of services available following service reviews. The service reviews have resulted in services which better meet local needs and priorities. The service reviews allowed the re-modelling of services to be more strategically relevant and to fit the five-year strategy. Services reflect the move from high support to medium and low support in accordance with the five-year strategy. The following is a list of some of the newly commissioned and reconfigured services delivered or about to be delivered.
- Learning disability: A new provider is to manage a support service contract for the provision of housing-related support services for people with learning disabilities. The service was awarded following a competitive tender process. Services will include an accommodation-based support service for 12 people providing a high needs housing-related support service to enable individuals to live independently in the community, accommodation-based support service for 12 people providing a medium needs housing-related support service to enable individuals to live independently in the community and accommodation-based service for ten adults in one-bedroom self-contained flats or studios, except where service users express a wish to share larger homes with one or more other service users.
 - Mental Health services: Working in partnership with mental health a needs assessment exercise identified the need for provision of a mental health service for 8 people with complex needs aged 17 plus. The aim of the service will be to enable individuals to live independently in the community. This service is available following reinvestment of funding allocated to Medway Reach out project. Negotiations with a local charitable trust identified a model of support, which enables service users to stay in the accommodation when they no longer need the support and release additional accommodation for new referrals. Once accommodation has been secured this service will be tendered.
 - Assessment, outreach and floating support services: Contracts have recently been awarded for the assessment and floating support service to West Kent Housing Association and the outreach service to In Touch. The service specification for the outreach service identifies the service as non-accommodation based, supporting individuals in their own or temporary accommodation. The client group is for individuals who have little or no experience of independent living and need help establishing and maintaining a tenancy and developing life skills. The service specification for the floating support service is for individuals with little or no experience of independent living and need help in establishing a tenancy and developing life skills. The number of contracted units is 300 but is for a maximum of 18 months.

- 109** Existing services have been improved following service reviews. The requirement that all providers meet level C of the QAF and newly commissioned services meet level B means that there have been improvements in support planning, health and safety and risk management. As a result of the service review process, the Supporting People team has been able to ensure that a provider of a young persons' foyer now has a more inclusive referral policy which ensures that people with challenging behaviour are now able to access the scheme.
- 110** We undertook visits to a range of different accommodation-based and non-accommodation-based service. The quality of services visited was of a high standard. Visits to providers have shown a good standard of accommodation with modern and good quality fittings which are appreciated by service users.
- 111** The Supporting People programme includes offender needs, and is now positioned to improve provision as better information comes on stream. Kent Probation Area was able to get the Supporting People contracts to become more flexible, allowing residents to stay more than six months, to a maximum of 12 months, with help given with move-on.
- 112** The Supporting People programme is helping to address the needs of young homeless people. Medway has high levels of 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast. Housing and Supporting People have worked together to enable the development of a new housing development for this client group. The scheme developed by a specialist housing association which is shortly to open will provide 21 units. Central to this provision is the availability of floating support which is to be delivered by a separate provider. This will significantly reduce the number of young people in bed and breakfast from the current 31 to 10. The Council is also talking to another housing provider about the possible provision of a further ten units of accommodation of shared units suitable for young offenders.
- 113** There is not a systematic approach to measurement of outcomes from improvements. Although there have been a range of improvements to services which are of benefit to service users, there is currently no system for measuring outcomes from these changes in services. The steady state contracts allow for such measurement but this is not yet being monitored and not all providers have signed the new contracts.
- 114** There have been limited outcomes for some vulnerable groups. The lack of comprehensive needs analysis across some specific groups, as highlighted in the diversity section of this report means that the Council cannot be sure it is addressing the needs of all groups. For example, the lack of a full needs assessment of gypsies and travellers means that the Supporting People strategy may not fully reflect the needs of this particular group.

- 115 Case studies illustrating the benefits of the Supporting People programme in Medway are set out below.

Case study 1 - Accommodation-based support service for adults with a Learning Disability

Mr A was referred to the service by the Care Management team. He had spent his whole life in care. Mr A was initially placed with Barnardos as a child and then moved on to a variety of long-term residential care settings. He had lived in several homes during his adult life.

Emotionally Mr A presented as a very angry man, full of frustration. Within his care home he displayed regular outbursts of aggressive behaviour. He had not been given an opportunity within any of his residential care homes to learn life skills. He stated that he wanted to be independent but didn't know what to do as everything was done for him. During the years of residential care he had often talked to his Care Manager about wanting to be more independent and the desire to do things for himself.

Mr A was referred to the service by his Care Manager. His assessment identified that in addition to needing the housing-related support service he also needed some domiciliary care support to enable him to manage his care needs. Working in partnership with the Person Centred Commissioning Group it was agreed that Mr A's needs could be met by Anchor Support Services. Initially Anchor provided 16 hours of housing-related support. This support focused on the skills required to maintain a tenancy and live independently in the community. The domiciliary support provided 10 hours support per week to Mr A. This support focused on his care needs. Initially overnight support was also provided in order to ensure that he felt secure. Over time Mr A has learnt all the life skills necessary to live in a house shared by two other gentlemen. He is now responsible for his own money. He is able to shop, cook and clean and look after his personal needs.

Mr A now receives six hours of housing-related support from Anchor and continues to receive an additional ten hours of domiciliary support to help him manage his care needs. He has no aggressive outbursts and states his future looks bright. Mr A eagerly attends the service-based tenant forums and meetings. His ideas for his own future include looking for employment. He has just started to look after his own garden. He has a full social life and enjoys utilising all services in the local community. A is very caring and enjoys living independently. States his life is now 'great'.

Case study 2 - Floating Support service for vulnerable adults

Mr B was identified as a crack cocaine user who had been in and out of Brooke Ward at Medway Maritime Hospital, and Littlebrook in Dartford. He had made three suicide attempts in the past year. He had no contact with his children or family. Mr B was (following discharge from hospital) identified as statutory homeless. Because of his mental health problems Mr B's family had refused to engage with him, this included refusing access to his children.

Mr B was referred to the floating support service by the homeless team. He was not referred to B&B because of his vulnerability, but was initially accommodated in a generic hostel for the homeless. On assessment Mr B and support staff identified that he needed every kind of support with regard to a tenancy from budgeting to understanding his rights and responsibilities. Mr B's personal goals were to come off crack cocaine, access a doctor, establish links with the family and to get an income.

Mr B received weekly visits by Support Officer from February 2005 to February 2006. Support sessions lasted approximately two hours per week and were focused on achieving goals established in the support plan. He received support to access permanent accommodation and was rehoused through Homechoice. A number of additional referrals were made with Mr B in order that he could access the specialist services he needed. These included referral to Addaction and the Community Mental Health Team. Mr B has since been diagnosed as having a Personality Disorder.

Mr B successfully applied for DLA. He now sees his children and has a good relationship with his family. He now lives independently in an MHS property. Mr B was supported to apply for a Community Care Grant and successfully furnished his flat. He has also joined the Black Lion on a Passport to Leisure.

Mr B no longer receives support but is positive about the future he plans to apply to college for Health and Social Care courses.

Case study 3 - Accommodation-based support service for ex-offenders

Miss C was referred to Langley House Trust by HMPO Edmunds Hill. She had convictions for possessing class A drugs and theft. The most recent conviction was for supplying class A drugs.

Miss C was referred to the service as requiring an accommodation-based support service to enable her to develop the skills required to integrate back into the community and address the issues that led her to offend. During her assessment Miss C disclosed that she had a history of drug misuse. She stated she had suffered physical abuse by a family member had been involved in prostitution and attempted suicide. She was diagnosed as suffering from depression while in prison and was on medication. She also advised that she had a history of alcohol abuse. She was accepted at the project in July 2004.

Langley House Trust worked with Miss C to establish what her support needs and goals were. It was agreed that one of her priorities was to develop the skills she needed to live independently free from the need to resort to the use of substances or commit crime. In particular it was identified with Miss C that she needed support to access training to enable her to access the skills needed to seek employment. She initially received 12 hours support per week from the team. This support focused on the goals identified in her support plan.

Miss C has attended and completed a range of Learn Direct training courses including Getting a Job, Communication and Surf Direct.

She has been supported to access support through the community mental health team. Miss C has also attended a course with Addaction to help her address her substance misuse problems.

Miss C expressed an interest in counselling and has also attended two courses to enable her to learn and develop counselling skills. In addition, she wanted to address some of her own personal issues. She was supported to access personal counselling through a local service.

Miss C has also been supported to apply for passport to leisure and as a result, has accessed a variety of leisure services.

Miss C has been resident at the project for nearly two years. She is now stable and remains drug and alcohol free. She has also not re-offended and continues to engage with mental health services. She is now being supported to move on and is actively seeking employment. The support provided to Miss C has gradually reduced to prepare her for moving on and living independently.

Miss C has just been offered a flat through Medway Home choice and will be moving in when it is ready in August. She feels that she now has the skills and opportunities to live independently without the need to resort to crime or use of substances.

Value for money

- 116** There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in relation to value for money. Costs are relatively high compared to other Councils. Limited benchmarking makes it difficult to make robust cost or quality comparisons with other authorities. However, service reviews have resulted in the Supporting People grant being utilised more effectively to meet needs. The service aims to contract services from the best providers. But to date value for money has been largely limited to service reviews.

How do costs compare?

- 117** The most recent regional and national comparative data shows that Medway's costs are relatively high although more recent unpublished data indicates that costs for services are around the same or better than the median. The Platinum cut data from 2003/04 shown in the table below indicates that costs were significantly higher than the regional and the national average.

Table 1 Unit cost comparison of Supporting People grant per head of population 2003/04

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit – excluding community alarms	Per unit- excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Medway	£ 0.49	£ 35.37	£ 40.48	£ 88.44
Region	£0.52	£24.94	£32.26	£71.78
England	£0.70	£28.30	£34.71	£76.37

- 118** Unpublished figures for 2005/06 indicate that costs compare favourably with other authorities. For example, Medway spent an average per unit of £3,344 for accommodation-based and £1,517 for non-accommodation-based generic services compared to a national median of £2,481 and £2,818 respectively. In relation to specific services for women at risk of domestic violence, Medway spent a unit average of £14,622 for accommodation-based services and £1,069 for non-accommodation-based services compared to national median figures of £12,902 and £3,425 respectively. In all these examples Medway is within or below the DCLG value for money zone.

- 119 The five-year strategy provides a detailed analysis of cost comparisons and highlights that the following services were significantly more expensive than services for similar client groups in the region:
- the cost of supporting people with physical or sensory disabilities was around twice the regional average and the figures indicating significantly higher floating support costs;
 - support for refugees was roughly in line with the national average but over twice as high as the region;
 - Medway spent around 30 per cent more on single people with support needs, generic floating support and young people leaving care than the regional average; and
 - Medway spent around 25 per cent more on young people at risk than the regional average.
- 120 The strategy also highlighted areas where Medway spent less than other ALAs:
- spend on older people with support needs was less than a third of the regional average;
 - spend on people with alcohol problems was about 30 per cent less than the regional average; and
 - spend on people with learning disabilities was around 25 per cent less than the regional average.
- 121 Use of benchmarking has so far been limited to cost and not quality of service provision. The Council has been instrumental in taking forward regional benchmarking but has found the quantity and quality of data provided by other ALAs to be a problem. It has carried out some benchmarking since the platinum cut. It has comparative data for 2005/06 based on upper and lower quartiles. However, the robustness of this data makes meaningful comparisons difficult.

How is value for money managed?

- 122 Appropriate steps were taken to ensure that high cost services were subject to early reviews. The ALA acted on the information from the 2004 comparisons to prioritise its reviews. Steps taken since 2004 include an early review of physical and sensory disability services which resulted in ineligible funding being withdrawn. Following needs analysis, services supporting refugees were decommissioned. Following service reviews of floating support, services have been remodelled to target support at those in greatest need. Value for money is central to the process with services being competitively tendered.

- 123** Service reviews were based on a clear statement on value for money. The statement sets out the formula used. This formula is based on staffing salary details and support provision at services to obtain a unit cost, staffing cost and overhead figure for the service. Despite this statement, providers did not find the approach to value for money to be sufficiently transparent. This was at least in part due to the fact that the service review reports did not explain in detail why a service did or did not represent value for money, or provide the comparative data on which these assessments were made.
- 124** A schedule of acceptable costs has been compiled by client group, service type, duration of contract, unit cost and the average hourly staff rates. This is used to compare the acceptable cost price with the quality of service provided. A table of cost averages for each client group was issued to providers. It was based on reasonable price analysis and incorporated upper and lower quartiles.
- 125** Inflationary increases were awarded to providers in 2005/06. This was as a result of the savings made through the service reviews, particularly in the remodelling of high cost services the Council awarded providers⁵ with a 3 per cent inflationary increase. This was above the basic inflationary level in recognition that providers had not received an increase in the previous two years.
- 126** The service aims to contract services from the best providers. All internal providers were subject to the same review process as other providers. The new floating support contract has been awarded to a high performing⁶ Housing Association. The tenancy support service was previously provided internally, but was not successful in the tender process and also demonstrates that the programme is governed independently to the Council.
- 127** All legacy services have been reviewed. The ALA completed a review of all services which were considered to be ineligible for Supporting People grant. As a result, the Council is confident that there is no longer any funding of ineligible services.
- 128** Since the staff restructuring, the Council does not measure the amount of expenditure on administering the Supporting People programme. As staffing costs for contract officers and administrative staff are now pooled between Supporting People and other social care contracting work the Council does not have a clear measure on how much is being spent on Supporting People administration. Without a method of recording the time spent on the respective functions there is a risk that staff may spend a disproportionate amount of time on one aspect of their work and that the Council will not have a full understanding of the costs it is incurring in running the programme. Up until 2005/06 this has not been a problem and the Council has kept clear accounts which showed the full administrative costs.

⁵ Awarded to providers with steady state contracts or those with more than a six months term remaining.

⁶ The association was awarded the maximum three stars 'excellent' for its services in a previous Audit Commission inspection of its services in 2005/06.

- 129 The approach to value for money has focused on service reviews. The ALA has not become fully engaged in wider approaches that could deliver greater value for money such as development of joint commissioning with other Supporting People authorities.

Summary

- 130 Overall, Medway is delivering a 'fair' Supporting People programme.
- 131 The Council has clearly established itself as the Administering Local Authority and there are some strong partnership links with the PCT to deliver strategic objectives. The Commissioning Body (CB) provides a strong strategic basis to deliver the programme and is supported by the Core Strategy Development Group (CSDG). There is a clear corporate commitment to the programme. There is a clear five-year strategy although there has been a mixed level of needs mapping. Shared targets have not been developed with partners. New staffing structures have yet to become embedded.
- 132 The approach to service reviews has largely been comprehensive. Service reviews have led to decommissioning and re-modelling of services. Although the Council has not been sufficiently robust in administering improvement planning for service reviews.
- 133 There is not a planned or strategic approach to user involvement. Although there were some examples of positive engagement during the service reviews and in development of the five-year strategy, the quality of involvement was mixed. There are significant weaknesses in the approach taken to access to services and information. Information on the programme is limited and access arrangements lack customer-focus.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 134 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in terms of track record. The Council demonstrates that it delivers in accordance with Government deadlines and requirements. New services have been introduced following completion of the service reviews. Relevant performance indicators demonstrate continuous improvement in most areas. Service reviews have led to some more cost effective services. A corporate trend of improvement also supports improvement within the programme. However, not all targets set out within the team plan have been completed on time and although the service reviews were completed within the Government deadline, there was some slippage in the review programme.

- 135** The Council has a track record of delivering in accordance with Government deadlines and requirements. The five-year strategy was completed by the deadline of March 2005 and service reviews were all completed by the end of March 2006. Although the timetable for completion of the service reviews slipped, all reviews were completed by the deadline. However, some of the later reviews, particularly of sheltered housing were not as robust as earlier ones.
- 136** Service reviews have led to new services being introduced. The remodelling of services for people with learning disabilities has resulted in more appropriate services being provided. Some services which were either not providing value for money or were not meeting the standards of care required have been decommissioned. The use of the QAF has ensured that services have been improved. For example, all Supporting People clients should now have an individual support plan in place.
- 137** There has been mixed performance in terms of meeting deadlines set within the five-year strategy. The strategy included a team annual plan for 2005/06. Some actions within the plan were not delivered within the deadline set. For example, plans to develop and implement the common referral, nominations and allocations procedure were not completed by March 2006. Plans to develop and implement a move on strategy by May 2005 have not been achieved. The development of a new review programme and contract monitoring arrangements for steady state contracts was not completed by the target date of September 2005. Plans to develop a Communications Strategy by November 2005 were not realised. However, some other actions set out in the plan were achieved within target dates. For example, work with learning disability partners to transfer funds from residential schemes was completed according to programme. The terms of reference of both the Commissioning Body and the CSDG were completed during the year and the Supporting People awareness day was held as planned.
- 138** There is a record of achievement in improving value for money in relation to the Supporting People programme. As a result of service reviews, there has been a reduction in some costs. Improvements include a reduction in costs for RNID floating support services of £19,000 and reductions of approximately £10,000 in a specific provision for women offenders. The Supporting People budget has been redistributed with the outcome that 10 per cent of the overall budget has been re-designated for low and medium support services. Renegotiation of contracts has enabled the authority to award inflationary increases in payments to providers.
- 139** Performance indicators demonstrate that related services are continuing to improve. Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators show that for adults services overall there has been a slow, steady trend of improvement since 2002/03. Analysis of unaudited data for 2005/06 demonstrates that the improvement has been sustained. Of particular relevance to this inspection has been improvements which are helping people to live independently. Also of note has been improvements in the PSA indicator on delayed discharge from hospital which has reduced from 25 days in 2002/03 to 20.62 days in 2004/05.

- 140 Steps have been taken to tackle areas of weak performance. The Council recognises that its performance in terms of homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation has been weak. BVPI 183 shows that the average length of stay in bed and breakfast and hostels for families has been unacceptably high at three weeks and 15 weeks respectively in 2004/05. The levels of use of temporary accommodation for families and young single homeless people still remains very high but steps have been taken to address this issue. For example, Supporting People grant is being used to fund an increase in tenancy support and floating support schemes.
- 141 There is a corporate track record of improvement. The 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment by the Audit Commission concluded that the Council is improving well. The assessment stated that Medway is improving services it knows are important to local people. It stated that in partnership with other agencies the Council was working well to deliver better services for older people. This trend continues with the recent publication of the Corporate Assessment which judged the Council as performing well.

How does the service manage performance?

- 142 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. There are clear and challenging aims for the programme. This is supported by a clear corporate performance management framework. There are plans in place to address many of the weaknesses identified in this report. Leadership is effective. Appropriate risk and financial management arrangements are in place. However, the Council is not maximising learning opportunities and there are gaps in some related plans. Contract review meetings have yet to routinely take place. Shared performance indicators have not been developed with partners and there are not clear and robust plans for future value for money efficiency targets.
- 143 There are clear and challenging aims for the Supporting People programme in Medway. The five-year strategy makes it clear what the ALA and its partners aim to achieve. The vision of providing 'sustainable, co-ordinated and cost effective support' is linked to the five strategic objectives. These objectives feature within the annual business plan, making it clear how each task or action point contributes to the overall objectives. It is clear from the strategy that the approach to Supporting People is one that will see funding move from high support to be redistributed to low and medium levels of support. The strategy also identifies the outcomes that are expected from each action point. This makes it possible to measure whether actions have achieved the expected result.

- 144** The overarching strategy is supported by clear improvement planning arrangements. An annual business plan sets clear tasks to be completed during 2006/07. These tasks address the key areas for improvement identified within the strategy. For example there is an objective 'to improve service user involvement'. Detailed or 'SMART' objectives are listed alongside the five strategic objectives. For each objective there is a series of tasks to be undertaken with a lead officer or the Commissioning Body being identified as being responsible for seeing that the task is completed by a specified date. This makes it easy to identify how the task links to the overall objective for the programme and ensures clear accountability for every action.
- 145** A clear performance management framework ensures that individual work plans align with the Council's overall objectives and those set in the five-year strategy. There is a performance framework in place that cascades from the corporate plan, to directorate, team and then individual level through the personal development review (PDR) system. PDRs are carried out annually and reviewed at least every six months. Monthly one-to-one meetings between line managers and their staff provide an opportunity for progress to be reviewed more frequently. This ensures that staff are clear about their programmes of work and how they contribute to the overall programme and the wider objectives of the Council. However, administrative staff within the newly amalgamated commissioning team are yet to have their targets and objectives updated to reflect their new Supporting People responsibilities.
- 146** There is a structured and consistent approach to service planning within the Council. A standard template is used for service planning that incorporates the ten corporate objectives. This ensures that each department reflects the corporate objectives and actions to achieve them. The Medway excellence model is applied in service planning; this includes a self-assessment or facilitated assessment. However, a joint service plan for Supporting People and social care has not yet been amalgamated.
- 147** There are plans in place to address many of the weaknesses identified in this report. The Business Plan 2006/07 includes tasks that should address many of the key weaknesses, particularly in relation to service user involvement, enhancement of move-on services and the development of new contract management arrangements. However, some weaknesses are not fully addressed in the plan for example those relating to access and information.
- 148** A corporate framework ensures that key performance indicators are regularly monitored at a senior level. A basket of key performance indicators relating to the strategic priorities are monitored through Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee every quarter and the corporate management team every month. Indicators that are not performing are raised by exception at directorate management team. The Commissioning Body and CSDG receive quarterly performance reports detailing the performance of providers.

- 149** There is effective leadership of the service. As chair of the Commissioning Body, the Director of Community Services plays a full and active role in shaping and delivering the programme. This has enabled the Council to work effectively at a strategic level to develop and modernise adult social care services through joint working with health partners. Senior officers are clear on the priority of the Council to integrate services. This is seen as a key drive behind the restructure and is part of the Council's focus on social regeneration that will address the needs of all service users. There has been a recent change in portfolio holder responsible for Supporting People. However, the previous portfolio holder demonstrated an active involvement through regular attendance at Commissioning Body meetings. Overall, the Council's approach to leadership is strong with the recently published Corporate Assessment highlighting that managerial leadership is strong and political leadership effective.
- 150** Leadership is demonstrated by some of the difficult decisions that have been taken by the Commissioning Body and supported by councillors. The best example of this being the decision to reconfigure services for people with learning disabilities. While the decisions are consistent with the overall strategic aim of moving funding away from high support in the short term, they have not been popular with some who have been individually affected.
- 151** There is a clear approach to managing risk. The risk assessment plan contained within the five-year strategy shows the date the risk was identified, consequence of the risk occurring, probability, impact, actions to manage risk and the risk owner. In most cases this is either the Commissioning Body or the Lead Officer. A service user risk plan identifies separate risks that may be faced by service users such as poor service delivery by the provider.
- 152** The service demonstrates sound performance in financial management. An internal audit report in 2005 highlighted that both the administrative and service provision budgets are regularly monitored and annual outturn forecasts produced in line with the Council's revenue budgetary monitoring cycle. Reports showing a summary of the budget position and the forecast outturn have been regularly produced and issued to the Commissioning Body. Sound financial management is demonstrated by the fact that in 2005/06 there was a relatively small under-spend of £216,987 on an overall budget of nearly £6 million.

- 153** The Council is not maximising opportunities to learn from others and from complaints. The self-assessment does not demonstrate that the Council is fully aware of its weaknesses. For example the self-assessment fails to recognise areas for improvement relating to access. It does not identify the weaknesses in the arrangements for accessing information from the website and does not identify that the Supporting People information leaflet is not widely available. There is only limited reference made to the complaints process within the general publicity leaflet which means that the Council may not be receiving and therefore be learning from this method of contact with service users. Supporting People attend the cross-authority group (CAG) and the South East Regional Improvement Group (SERIG) but this has only brought limited examples of learning, for example it has helped in development of a leaseholders' policy. However, there has been some learning from the service review appeals process where recording and communication systems were improved in response to complaints. At a corporate level there are opportunities for learning such as quarterly lunchtime briefings by the Chief Executive and lunchtime learning sessions where examples of positive work is outlined and shared between directorates.
- 154** There are some gaps in specific plans outlining how agreed tasks will be completed. For example, although the integration of Supporting People within the Social Care Commissioning team took effect from March 2006, there has not been a clearly set out plan for ensuring that the merger of responsibilities has been completed systematically and effectively. Plans to carry out team building events were not programmed at an early stage and this has meant that embedding the new team has been a drawn out process. Similarly, although contracts have not been let for sheltered housing services because services are to be reconfigured there is no clear plan setting out how or by when this is to be completed.
- 155** Contract review meetings are not yet taking place on a routine basis. Following the completion of the service reviews and development of the steady state contracts, routine review meetings are planned between Contract Officers and providers. However, at the time of the inspection a full programme of review meetings had not been developed.
- 156** Some key related plans do not include quantified measurable targets. The Learning Disability Housing strategy 2004/09 includes an action plan but there are no quantified measurable targets or resources identified although timescales and responsibilities are clear.
- 157** The Council has not developed shared performance indicators with its partners. Although the Council is dependent on key partners such as health and probation for delivery of the Supporting People programme, a lack of shared performance indicators limits the capacity for shared management of performance.
- 158** There are not clear and robust plans for future value for money efficiency targets. Although the overall objectives of the Supporting People programme are closely linked to the ethos of efficiency there is not a systematic approach performance management in relation to value for money. This means that targets for future efficiencies are not being quantified nor regularly monitored.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 159** There is a fine balance between strengths and weaknesses in terms of capacity. Recent organisational changes have the potential to enhance capacity but these have yet to become embedded. There is a strong corporate commitment to the Supporting People programme and the general fund has supplemented the administration grant. Capacity is enhanced through strong partnership working. The Council is not making full use of IT systems.
- 160** The recent organisational changes provide the potential for the Supporting People programme to draw on a wider pool of staffing resources. Prior to March 2006, the programme was essentially dependent on four staff. This left the programme vulnerable in the event of staff absence. The Council has addressed this potential weakness by incorporating the Supporting People function within a wider Social Care Commissioning team. This means there are now four Contract Officers and a team of administrative staff who are responsible for all aspects of the programme including contract compliance monitoring, provider payments and performance management. As well as sharing operational capacity, this approach is designed to enhance strategic linkages with more integration in the adult social care community in Medway.
- 161** Staff who have recently taken on Supporting People responsibilities are not yet fully equipped to deliver and develop the programme. All four Contract Officers and all the administrative staff are new to Supporting People. These staff have contract management skills which are transferable to Supporting People. However, these skills are not yet being utilised to their potential. Although staff have been provided with induction training by the Lead Officer, this falls short of a full training programme.
- 162** Staff are not fully clear about their roles and responsibilities. The division of responsibilities had only just been agreed the week before the inspection; some months after the restructuring had taken place. These divisions of responsibility had not been implemented at the time of the inspection, creating a risk that Supporting People work would not be given sufficient priority compared with other commissioning responsibilities. Administration staff are unclear about the processes for collecting performance information from providers and this has led to some delays in receiving quarterly work book information. This presents a risk that full information may not be submitted to the DCLG on time. The problem is exacerbated by limitations in office capacity which means that administration staff are located in Gillingham while Contract Officers and the Team Leader are based in Chatham.

- 163** There is strong corporate support for the Supporting People programme in relation to procurement issues. The Lead Officer has been able to draw on the skills and knowledge of the corporate procurement team in developing a specific approach to contract procurement. The re-tendering of services such as those for learning disabilities and floating support have benefited from input in the tendering process. The Accountable Officer has developed a particular knowledge of best practice on procurement issues which is utilised both internally and outside of the Council. Commissioning and procurement guidance has been informed by the corporate Procurement Strategy which meets national guidance. The Corporate Assessment concluded that the Council has effective procurement practices.
- 164** The Supporting People programme is enhanced by strong corporate financial and human resources support. Human Resources support and advice has been provided during the reorganisation. This has included involvement in the consultation with staff and unions, drafting of job descriptions and generally handling the reorganisation and associated staffing matters. The Council is in the process of extending its competency framework to include principal managers (currently it is in position to Assistant Director level). This will aim to ensure that managers have basic and set competency levels in place. Financial management reports are provided which enable clear monitoring of programmed expenditure. The recent Use of Resources assessment judged Medway as 'performing well'.
- 165** The Council is putting in additional resources to the Supporting People programme. The administrative budget of £175,740 was supplemented by general fund expenditure of £34,901 in 2005/06. However, it is not clear to what extent the general fund will supplement the programme in 2006/07 as there is not currently a separate budget line for Supporting People within the Social Care Commissioning budget. The merger of commissioning functions and a lack of time recording systems means that the Council is not able to measure the precise expenditure on administrative support for the programme.
- 166** The Council is not making full use of existing IT systems. Although the current Supporting People software performs adequately in terms of its basic functions of provider and contract management it has some weaknesses. The system is not being used to record the profile of service users and this is a weakness in terms of understanding the diverse needs of clients. There is a long-term aspiration to expand the implementation of new adult services software to Supporting People but implementation of this has been delayed and there is no definite plan to incorporate Supporting People at the moment.
- 167** Capacity is enhanced through strong partnership working. Internally, capacity was enhanced through close liaison and co-operation with the Learning Disabilities team during the service review period. The Learning Disabilities budget was utilised to secure funding for a care management consultant to help with the service review process. Adult services and the PCT have a strong working relationship. This has been developed significantly over the years, and resulted in joint ventures between the partners to deliver services to the residents of Medway.

Summary

- 168** On balance, there are marginally more strengths than weaknesses in terms of the future management of the Supporting People programme: prospects for improvement are therefore promising.
- 169** The track record of delivering in accordance with Government deadlines and requirements is positive. New services have been introduced following completion of the service reviews. Relevant performance indicators demonstrate continuous improvement in most areas. Leadership is effective and appropriate risk and financial management arrangements are in place. Recent organisational changes have the potential to enhance capacity. There is a strong corporate commitment to the Supporting People programme and the general fund has supplemented the administration grant. Capacity is enhanced through strong partnership working.
- 170** However, not all targets set out within the team plan have been completed on time and although the service reviews were completed within the Government deadline, there was some slippage in the review programme. The Council is not maximising learning opportunities and there are gaps in some related plans. Contract review meetings have yet to routinely take place. Shared performance indicators have not been developed with partners and there are not clear and robust plans for future value for money efficiency targets. The recent organisational changes have not become embedded and the Council is not making full use of IT systems.

Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

Demographic information

- 1 This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting People, comparing the Council and with England.

Table 2

Measure	Medway	England
Population (mid-2004) ⁷	251,100	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2004)	15.2	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2004)	5.4	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁸	3.0	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁹	172	-

⁷ Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

⁸ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (April 2006)

⁹ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority

Table 3 Percentage of the population¹⁰ in each age group compared with England

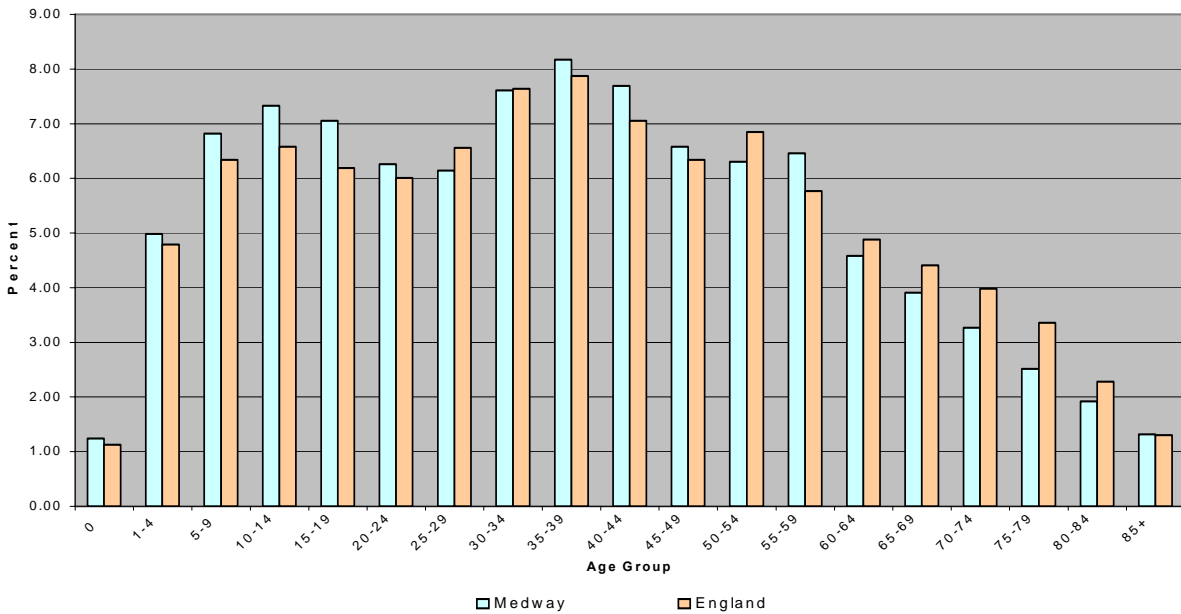
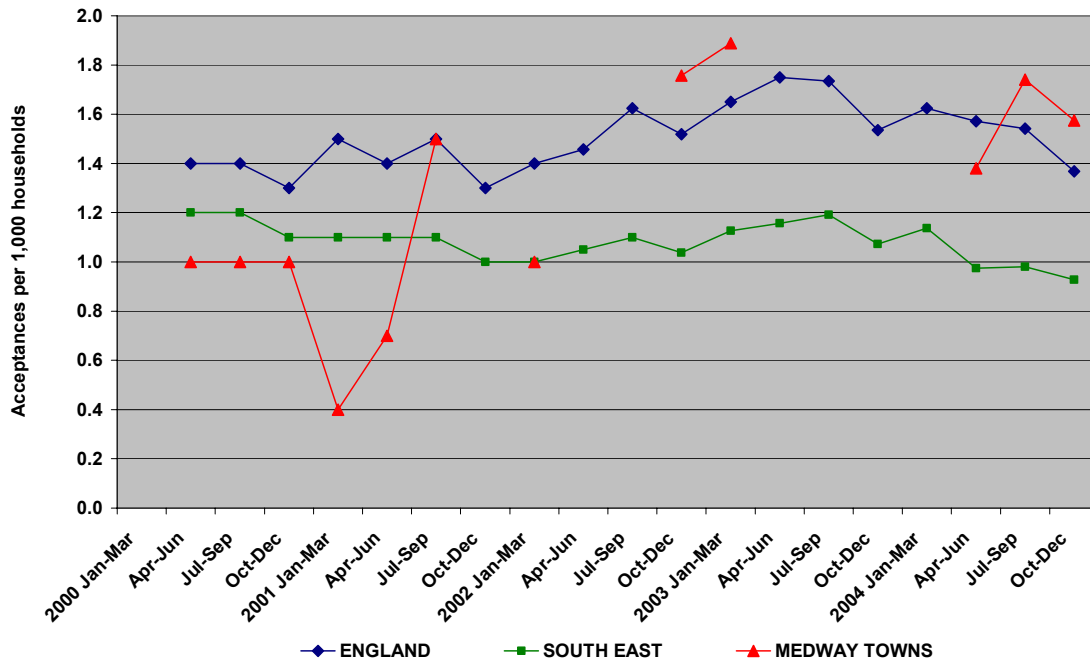


Figure 2 Households accepted as homeless between 2000 and 2004 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)



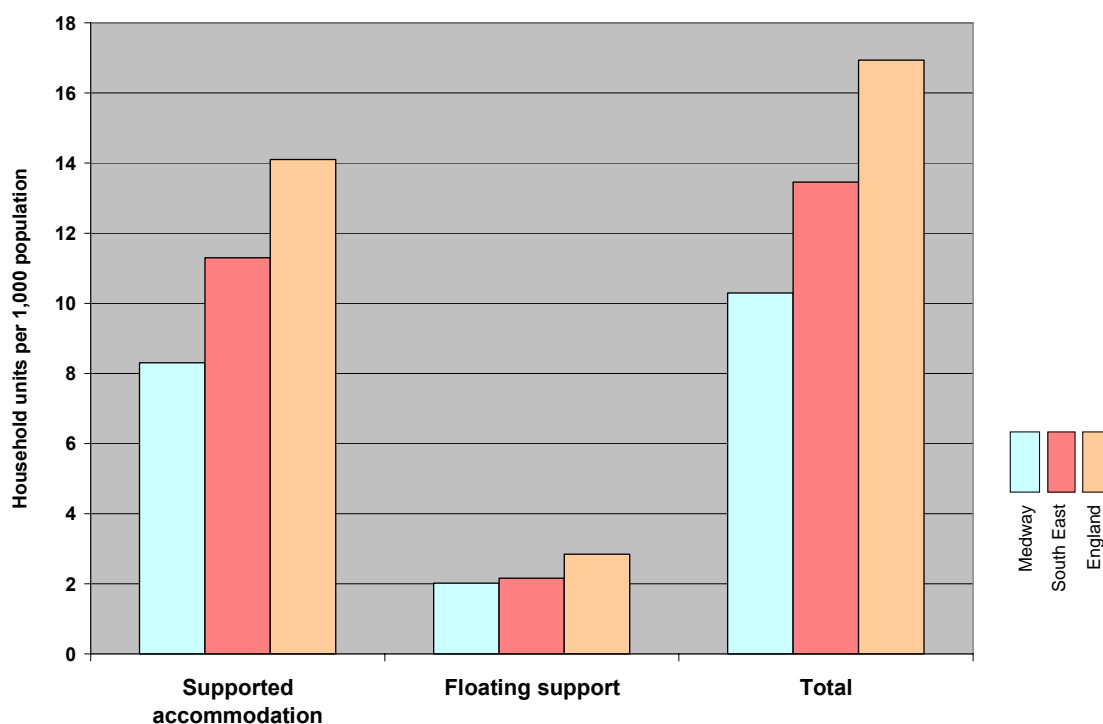
¹⁰ Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

Performance information

- 2 This section highlights strong and weak areas of the Council's performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements:
- data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
 - Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores;
 - star ratings for Social Services;
 - Performance Assessment Framework indicators for Social Services; and
 - relevant best value performance indicators.

Supporting People data

Figure 3 Total service provision funded through Supporting People¹¹



¹¹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 4 Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England¹²

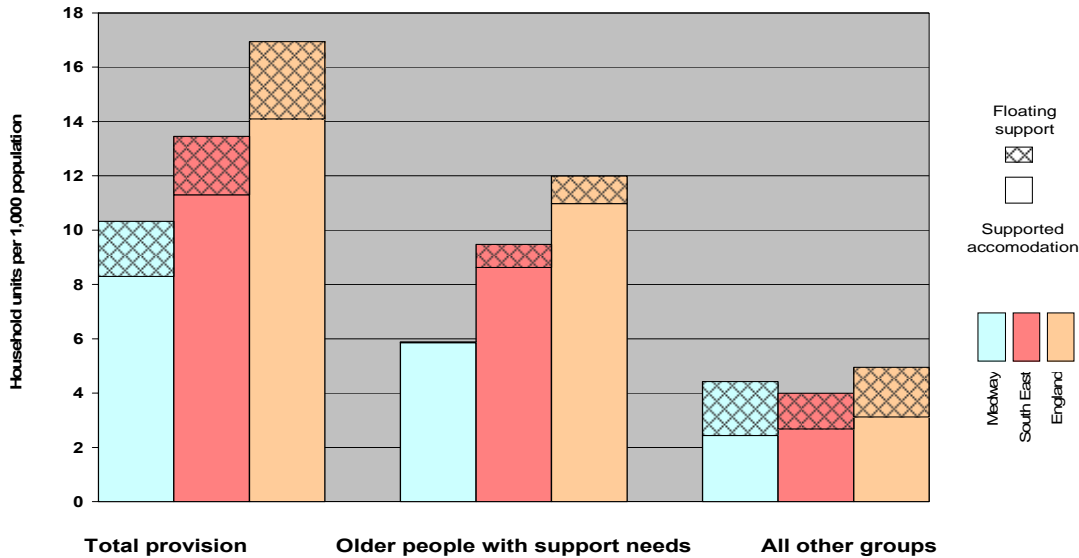
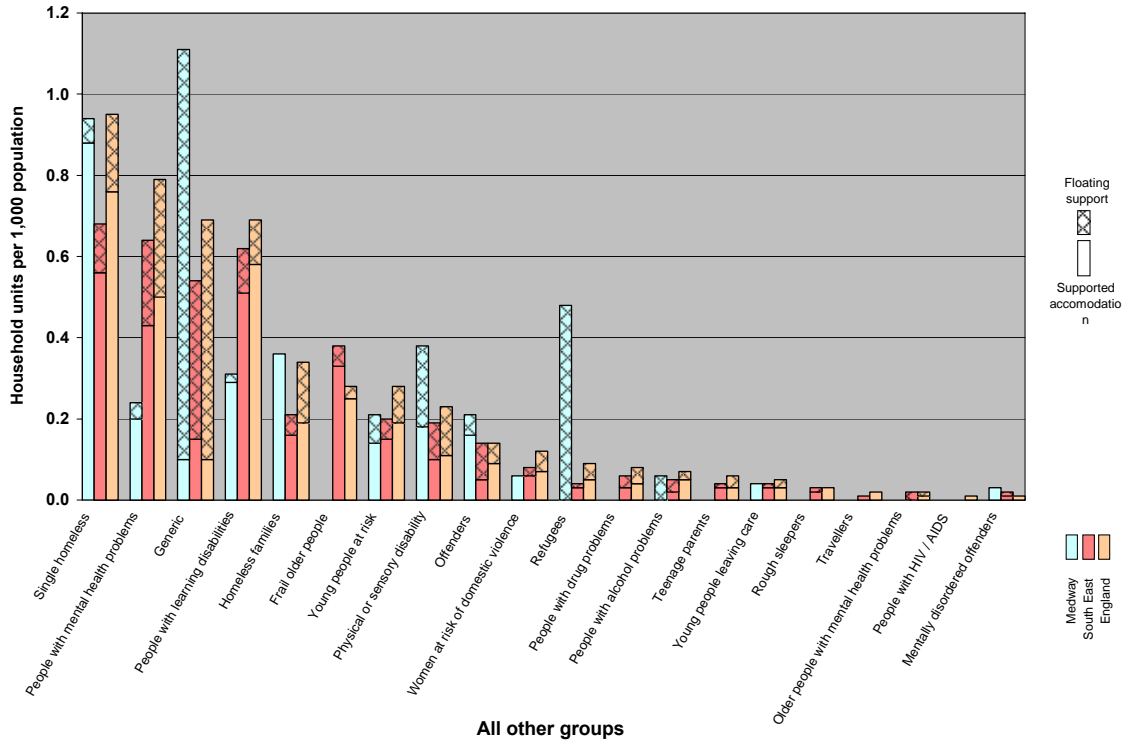


Figure 5 Services for other groups compared with the region and England¹³



¹² Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

¹³ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Table 4 Funding for Supporting People¹⁴

Medway	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Final Supporting People grant	£ 6,407,804	£ 6,258,903	£ 5,943,669
Pipeline allocation	£ 7,203	£ 7,512	£ -
Administration grant	£ 232,321	£ 219,675	£ 175,740

Table 5 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)¹⁵

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Medway	£ 0.49	£ 35.37	£ 40.48	£ 88.44
Region	£ 0.52	£ 24.94	£ 32.26	£ 71.78
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

¹⁴ Source: Grant allocations, ODPM¹⁵ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

Figure 6 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹⁶

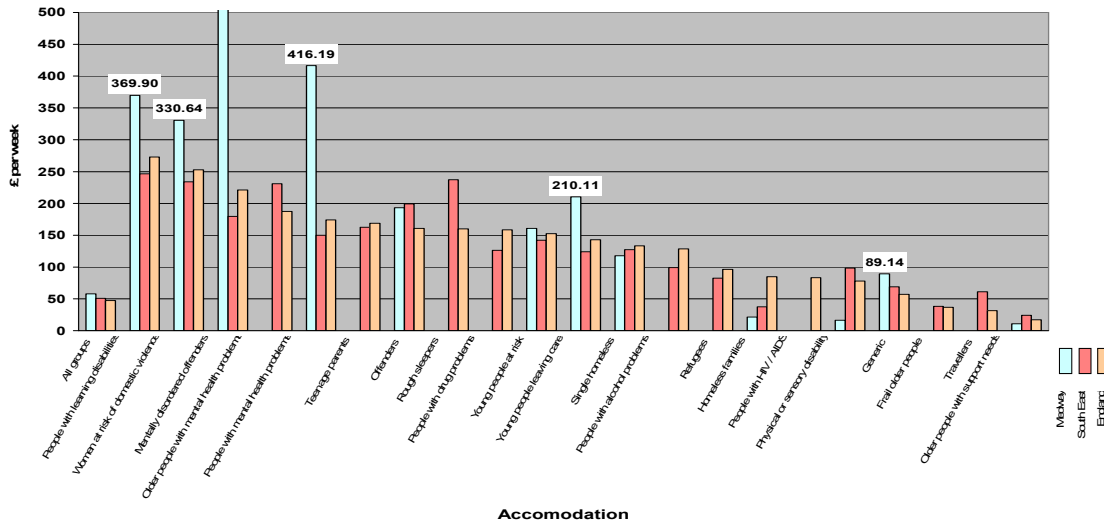
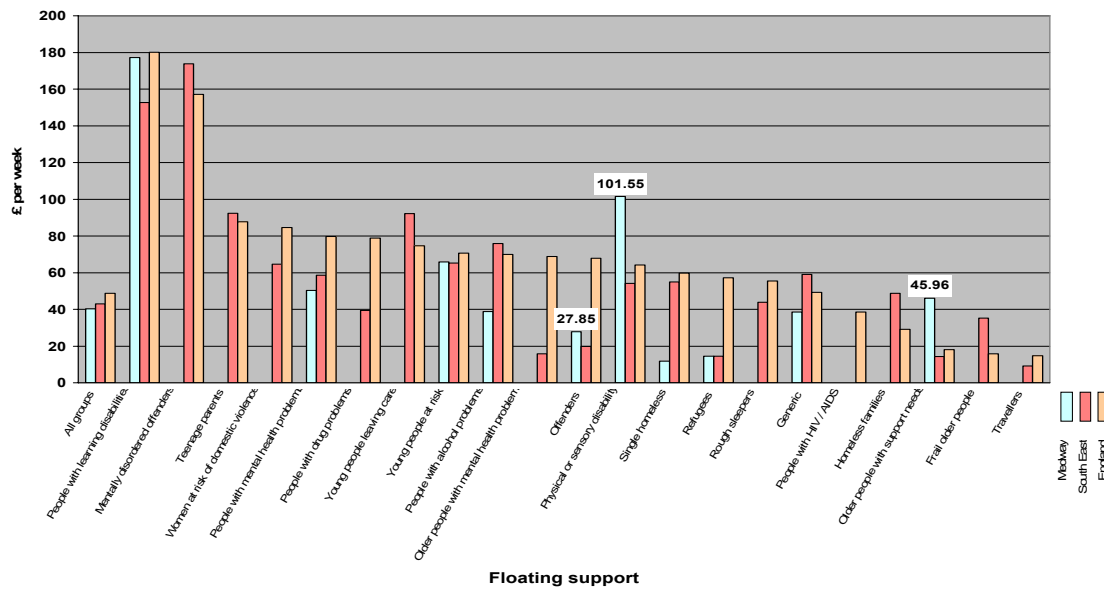


Figure 7 Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹⁷



¹⁶ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services

¹⁷ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services

Figure 8 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours,¹⁸ all metropolitan boroughs and all English councils (2004/05)

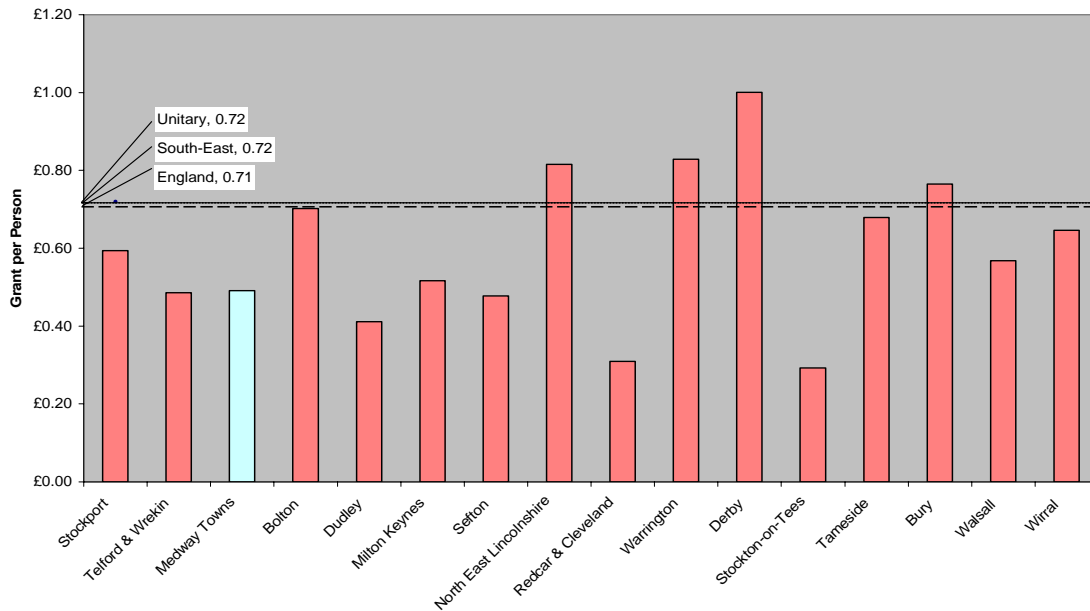
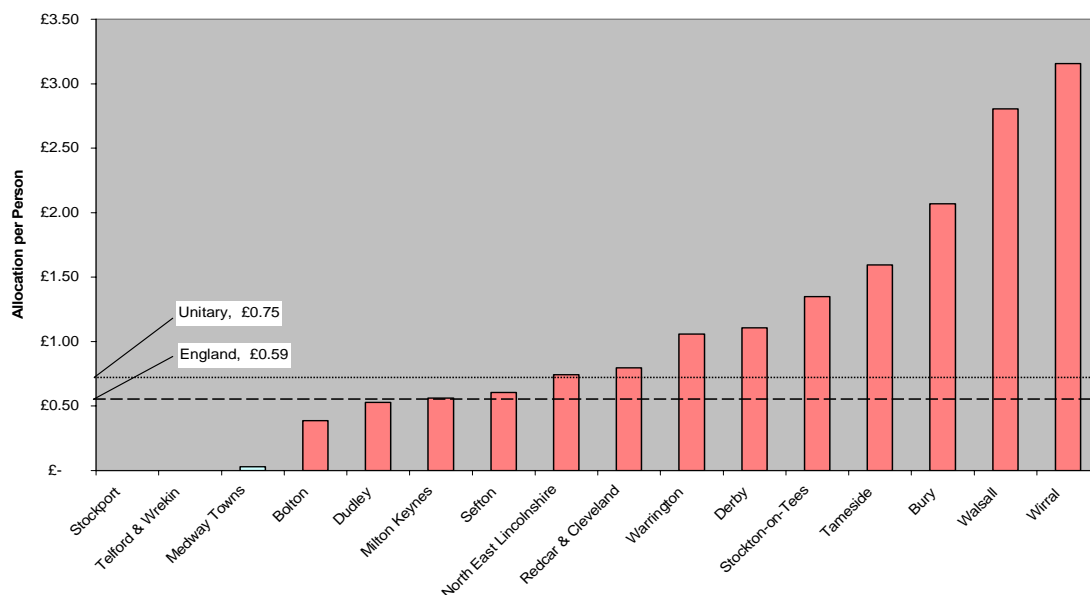


Figure 9 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours,¹⁹ all metropolitan boroughs and all English councils



¹⁸ A comparator group of similar councils.

¹⁹ A comparator group of similar councils.

Figure 10 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)²⁰

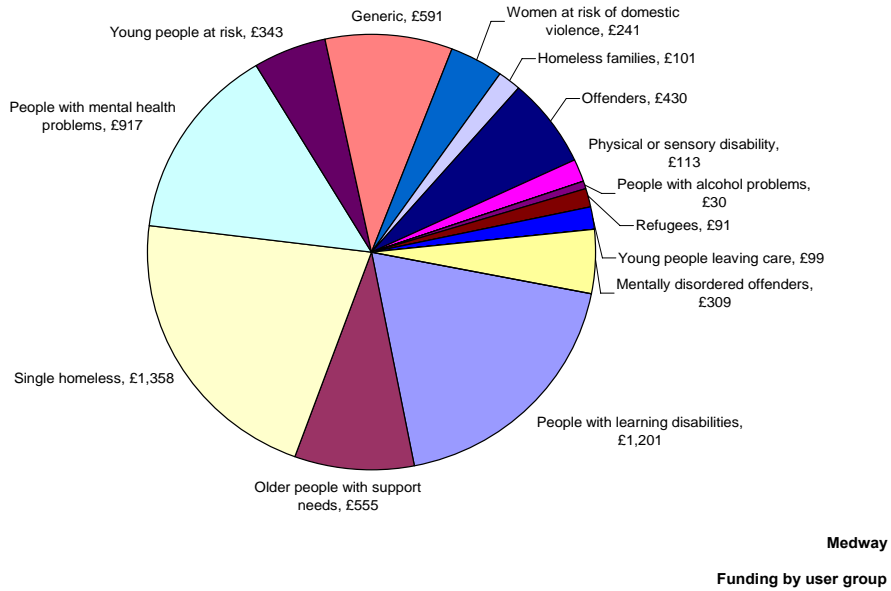
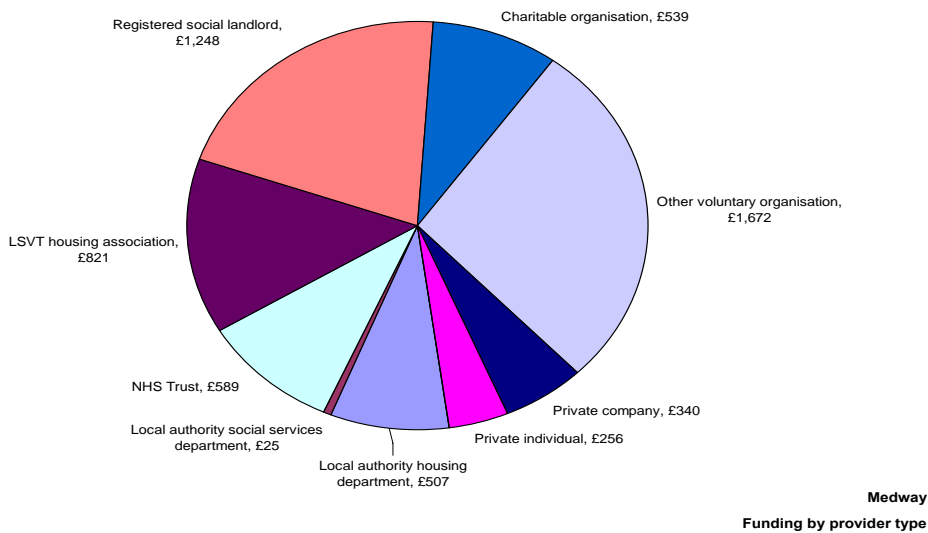


Figure 11 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)²¹



²⁰ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

²¹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Table 6 Social Services star ratings November 2004

The table below shows the Social Services Inspectorate ratings of the Council's performance.

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?	Performance rating (CPA equivalent)
Adults' Services	Most	Promising	★ (1)
Children's Services	Some	Uncertain	

Social services performance indicators

Table 7 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

The table below shows how the Council's Social Services performed on indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Medway	
Significantly above average (•••••)	Admissions of older people to residential/nursing care (C26)
Above average (••••)	Admissions of supported residents aged 18 to 64 to residential/nursing care (C27)
Average (•••)	Percentage change on previous year in total emergency admissions to hospital (A5) Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40) Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4)
Below average (••)	Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Older people helped to live at home (C32) Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51) Delayed transfers of care (D41) Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that their opinions and preferences were always taken into account (D57) Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that they can contact Social Services easily (D58) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54)
Significantly below average (•)	Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6)

Best value performance indicators

Table 8 Performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04 compared with unitary councils

The table below shows how the Council performed on best value performance indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Medway	
Within the best 25 per cent	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)
Average	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)

Appendix 2 – Documents reviewed

- 1 Before going on-site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that were provided for us. These included:
 - self-assessment;
 - Supporting People five-year strategy 2005/10;
 - minutes of and reports submitted to the Commissioning Body, Core Strategy Development Group and Supporting People/Inclusive Forum;
 - Supporting People Business Plan;
 - Social Care Service Plan;
 - service review reports;
 - financial reports and DCLG data;
 - an internal audit report;
 - information for service users leaflets; and
 - a range of related strategies.

Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken

- 1 When we went on-site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
 - interviews with key personnel, including Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Development Group representatives, contract team members, senior managers, partner organisations, providers and leading councillors;
 - visits to services funded by the Supporting People grant;
 - a questionnaire to service providers funded by the Supporting People grant;
 - mystery shopping phone calls and visits;
 - focus groups with a range of providers; and
 - observation of the IT system.